

NO JOKE: THE VALUE OF POLITICAL CARTOONS

Location: US

Date: 1800-Present

Grades 8-12

Essential Question: How have cartoons conveyed and even influenced political discourse in American history?

Objectives:

Students will begin to identify major elements of political cartoons at key moments in US history.

Students will note the ability of cartoons to affect the American political lexicon.

Students will explore political redistricting and extension of the franchise of blacks and women through political cartoons.

Curriculum Standards:

COMMON CORE

English and Language Arts, Grades 11 and 12, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
 RI.11-12.9. Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

English/Language Arts; History/Social Studies, Grades 9-12

Key Ideas and Details

RH.9-10-11-12.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RH.9-12.7. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

US History 1: The Revolution through Reconstruction, 1763-1877

The Formation and Framework of American Democracy

Political Democratization, 1800-1860

Civil War and Reconstruction

US History 2: Reconstruction to the Present, 1877-Present

The Age of Reform, 1900-1940

Cold War America at Home, 1945-1980

Contemporary America, 1980-Present

American Government Elective



Norman B. Leventhal
 Map Center
 at the Boston Public Library

<http://www.leventhalmap.org/>

AMERICA VOTES

Cartoons are highly effective ways to convey an opinion. In some cases, they become part of our lexicon. With an expanding electorate, often they were deployed to sway voters through emotional appeal. But one thing is certain—they were rarely something to joke about. Use this lesson to supplement your regular curriculum materials in a US History Survey Course.

Procedure:

1. With no background information, show students the Gerrymander cartoon, included on the Student Sheet. Have them complete Part I, Q 1-3 of Student Sheet. Discuss their results. The topic is covered in most history texts. But here is a case where the cartoon influenced our language and political practice. The cartoonist combined the name of the governor, Elbridge Gerry with the benign animal, salamander, and the term for creating political districts designed for one party's gain, *gerrymandering*, was born.
2. Now have students look at Map and Cartoon, as well as the current Map and Cartoon from Texas and complete the rest of Part I.
3. Many other issues in US history have drawn the pens of cartoonists, both to promote the cause and lament implementation. One example was the extension of the franchise to blacks and women, both topics again covered in standard US history textbooks. When relevant, please look at these two cartoons with your students and have them complete Section II.

Time Allocation:

Part 1: 20 to 30 minutes

Part 2: 15-20 minutes

Materials Needed:

Gerrymander image, included on Student Sheet

Gerrymander Map and Cartoon, <http://maps.bpl.org/id/14867>

Texas Map and Cartoon, included below, also located at <http://tcgop.org/proposed-texas-congressional-map/>

http://www.laits.utexas.edu/txp_media/html/leg/features/0401_01/slide1.html

Woman's Suffrage Cartoon, included below and also at

<http://content.lib.washington.edu/exhibits/suffrage/>

[click on tab five]

Voting Access Cartoon, included below

Assessment Criteria:

Did students begin to identify major elements of political cartoons at key moments in US history?

Did students note the impact of cartoons on the American political lexicon?

Did students explore political redistricting and extension of the franchise of blacks and women through political cartoons?



Norman B. Leventhal
Map Center
at the Boston Public Library

<http://www.leventhalmap.org/>

AMERICA VOTES

Enrichment Opportunities:

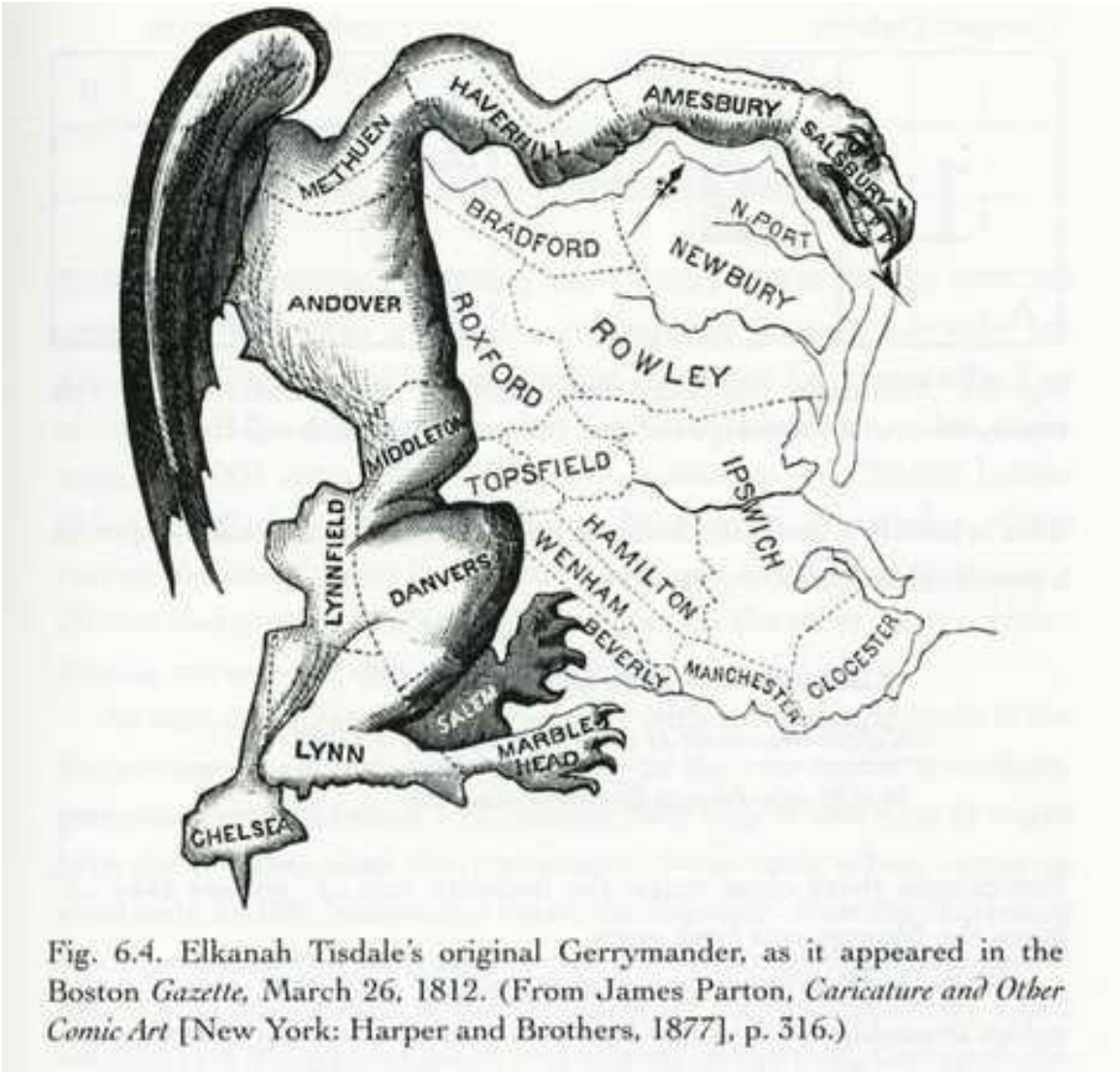
Have students look at cartoons from other time periods/topics. Sources include:
Harpers Weekly, <http://loc.harpweek.com/>
Presidential Elections, <http://elections.harpweek.com/>
Thomas Nast, <http://www.thomasnast.com/>

Student Sheets

Political cartoons are an important part of American history.

Part I

- 1. What does this image remind you of?
- 2. What features dominate the 'creature'?
- 3. As you look at it more closely, what words are also on this picture?



- 4. Now that you have seen the actual map, does the creature generate the same impression as it did before? Why or why not?
- 5. Look at the current cartoon and map from Texas. What is the cartoonist's point about the current redistricting process in Texas?



Norman B. Leventhal
Map Center
at the Boston Public Library

AMERICA V O T E S

6. What conclusions can you draw about the history of redistricting from these two cartoons? Do you think it is a fair assessment?

Student Sheets

Part II

According to the US Constitution,
Amendment 15 Ratified February 3, 1870.

1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Amendment 19 Ratified August 18, 1920.

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

1. Does either of these Amendments guarantee the right to vote? What do they promise?
2. Look at both cartoons. How is one full of promise and the other full of despair?
3. Consider the path of voting for women and blacks in America. Which took longer to accomplish? How do both of these cartoons only tell part of the story?

AMERICA VOTES

4. Look closely at the cartoon for Woman's Suffrage. Describe the poster on the wall. What is the central image? Whose name and date are included? Why do you think the cartoonist felt these were important to his message?

THE GERRY-MANDER!

IN TWO CHAPTERS.....WITH CUTS.

"Now I appeal to each bye-stander, If this is not a SALAMANDER. DEER SWIFT.

CHAP. I.....NATURAL HISTORY.

ALL that we can learn of the natural history of this remarkable animal, is contained in the following historical tradition, published in the newspapers of March, 1812, established by a drawing, which is pronounced by all competent judges, to be a most accurate likeness.



The horrid Monster of which this drawing is a correct representation, appeared in the County of Essex, during the last session of the Legislature. Various and manifold have been the speculations and conjectures, among learned naturalists respecting the genus and origin of this astonishing production. Some believe it to be the real Basilisk, a creature which had been supposed to exist only in the poet's imagination. Others pronounce it the Serpent Mole, a species of Pity, or single-headed Hydra, a terrible animal of pagan extraction. Many are of opinion that it is the Griffin or Hippogriff of romance, which flourished in the dark ages, and has come hither to assist the knight of the martial countenance in robbing that gloomy period of ignorance, fiction and imposition. Some think it the great Red Dragon, or Bunyan's Apollyon or the Mountain Harrowden of Virgil, and all believe it a creature of infernal origin, both from its aspect, and from the circumstance of its birth.

But the learned Doctor Waterbury who is famous for peeping under the skirts of nature, has decided that it belongs to the Salamander tribe, and gives many plausible reasons for this opinion. He says though the Devil himself must undoubtedly have been concerned, either directly or indirectly in the production of this most... yet many powerful causes must have concurred to give it existence, amongst which must be reckoned the present combustible and venomous state of affairs. There have been, says the Doctor many fiery exhalations of party spirit, many explosions of democratic wrath and delinquent vengeance within the year past, which would naturally produce an uncommon degree of inflammation and morbidity in the body politic. But as the Salamander cannot be generated except in the most potent degree of heat, he thinks those malignant causes, could not alone have produced such diabolical effects. He therefore ascribes the real birth and material existence of this monster, in all its horrors, to the share which he Excellency the Governor and his friends experienced last session, while they were under the influence of the Dog-star and the Comet—and while his Excellency was pregnant with his last speech, his... and a numerous litter of new ideas and other animals, of which he has since...

It is well known that the two political parties in Massachusetts have been for many years nearly equally divided, the balance however, generally inclining to the federal side. For six vacancies more previous to the birth of the GERRY-MANDER, the representation of the parties in the Senate, as chosen by the people, was divided in the following manner. The vacant districts were so equally divided, that no choice could be made by the people, and the vacancies were filled according to the political character of the other branch of the Legislature.

YEARS.	FEDERAL.	DEMOCRATIC.	VACANCIES.
1806,	19	20	1
1807,	19	21	0
1808,	20	18	2
1809,	23	15	0
1810,	20	18	1
1811,	19	21	0

In the year 1811, both the branches of the Legislature, and the Governor, were, with the exception of a single year, for the first time, democratic; but the experience of past years, taught the prevailing party, that the tenure of their power was extremely precarious, and that the confidence of their majority in the Senate was precarious, from the superiority of talents on the other side, quite embarrassing.

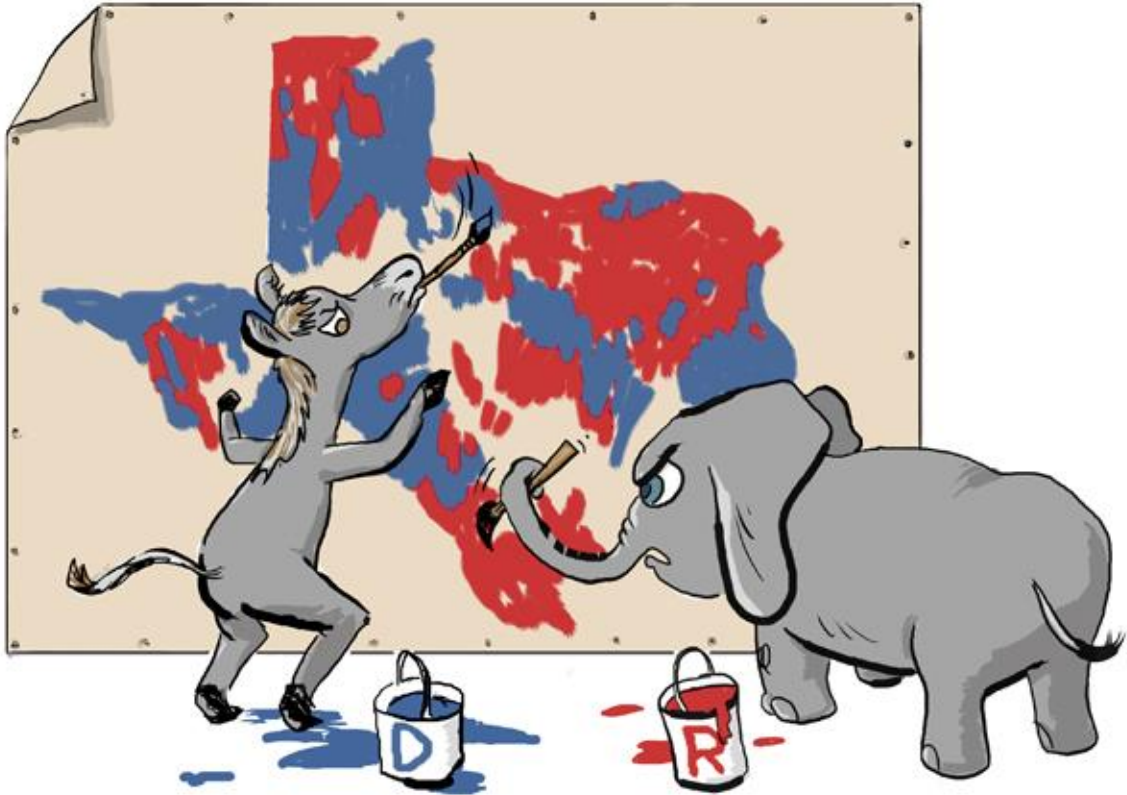
The senatorial districts had been formed, according to the natural and most obvious construction of the constitution, without any division of counties. To effect the desired object of securing a decided majority in the Senate in all future years, the Legislature divided the same into new senatorial districts in such a manner as to procure the election of the greatest number of democratic members. They not only divided counties to effect their object in opposition to the powerful arguments of the federal members, who urged the unconstitutionality of such a measure, but they divided the counties of Essex and Worcester in a manner which showed that all considerations of convenience or propriety were disregarded, and that the only object was to form a democratic district from each of these federal counties. This will be seen from the following plan of the two Essex Districts in which the double dotted lines show the boundaries of the districts as they were formed by the act of 1811, commonly called the Gerry-Mander law.



Norman B. Leventhal
Map Center
at the Boston Public Library

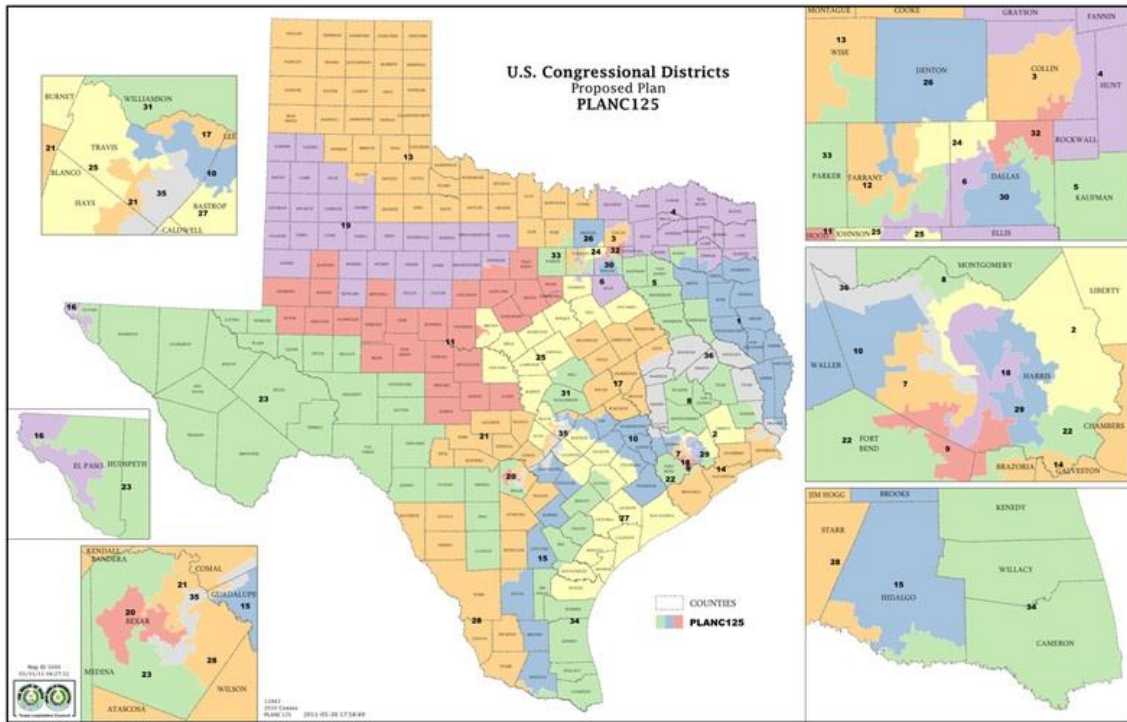
<http://www.leventhalmap.org/>

AMERICA V O T E S



Norman B. Leventhal
Map Center
at the Boston Public Library

<http://www.leventhalmap.org/>



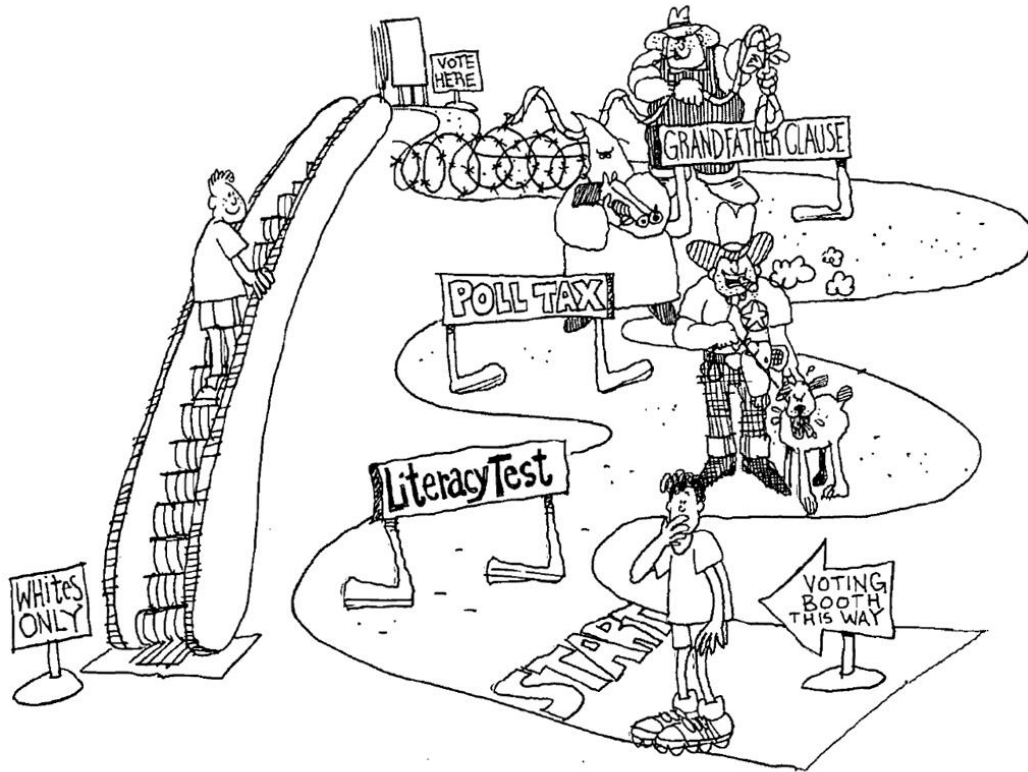
WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE CARTOON



Norman B. Leventhal
Map Center
at the Boston Public Library

<http://www.leventhalmap.org/>

VOTING ACCESS CARTOON



Norman B. Leventhal
Map Center
at the Boston Public Library